

Date: September 15, 2008
Contact: Ann Boucher (406) 896-5011

Prescribed Burns Planned South Of Potomac And West Of Helmville

Smoke may be visible during the next few weeks in the mountains south of Greenough and west of Helmville.

The Missoula Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is preparing for several prescribed burns this fall. The first burn is located in the Murray Creek drainage ten miles west of Helmville and is 110 acres. The second is in the Elk Creek and Keno Creek drainage about ten miles southeast of Greenough, and is 40 acres in size. Each of these burns will take up to five days to complete and will take place when weather and fuel conditions are favorable, but could occur anytime over the next month.

The prescribed burns will reduce the amount of fuel in the area by removing hazardous fuels. By removing the small, "ladder fuels" and down woody debris, the risk of large, catastrophic wildfires is also reduced. Fuels specialists are attempting to restore the historic conditions characterized by large diameter ponderosa pine and Douglas fir with intermittent openings.

Firefighters will ignite these prescribed burns by hand using drip torches. If you have questions, or want more information about these prescribed burns, please contact Shelagh Fox or Michael Albritton at the Missoula Field Office, phone 329-3914.

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Date: September 11, 2008
Contact: Dick Fichtler (406) 329-3884
Greg Albright (406) 896-5260

Garnet Ghost Town Closed Sept. 15-19

Garnet Ghost Town will be closed Sept. 15-19 while dead and dying timber is removed from the area.

"There will be logging equipment working at Garnet, and the only way we can ensure public safety is to close the town to visitors for a few days," said Nancy Anderson, Missoula Field Manager for the Bureau of Land Management.

The project is part of an effort to reduce the threat of wildland fire in the forest

surrounding Garnet. Unless the heavy loads of dead and dying timber are removed, a wildfire is virtually inevitable at some point and could leave the historic ghost town in ashes.

An infestation of mountain pine beetles in recent years has added to the steady buildup of dead trees, killing nearly all of the lodgepole pine in the area.

About 300 acres are being treated near Garnet. When completed, the forest will be more open, greatly reducing the area's susceptibility to catastrophic fire.

For more information on the project, contact the BLM Missoula Field Office, 406-329-3914.

Date: September 11, 2008
Contact: Ann Boucher, 406-896-5011

Be Bear Aware

Hunting season is here and the Bureau of Land Management encourages you to be "bear aware" while you're out on public lands in southwestern Montana.

Store your food and game in closed, hard-sided vehicles or in certified bear resistant containers, or hang it ten feet off the ground and four feet out from any tree.

To help recreationists follow these guidelines, the BLM has approved food storage panniers, a bear resistant kitchen and cooler, and an electric fence available for free checkout from the BLM's Dillon Field Office.

For more information call the BLM Dillon Field Office at (406) 683-8000.

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Date: September 8, 2008
Contact: Ann Boucher, 406-896-5011
Babete Anderson, 406-657-6205, ext. 239

Fire Restrictions Dropped in Yellowstone

and Surrounding Counties

Fire restrictions on private, state and federal lands in south-central Montana will be lifted early Thursday morning, Sept. 11.

But, fire officials warn, that doesn't necessarily mean that fire season is completely over.

"Some areas got some good rain," commented Babete Anderson, coordinator for the interagency Billings Area Restrictions Group. "But other areas are as dry as ever, and still very susceptible to fire."

Cooler daytime temperatures and shorter days also help, but anyone who works or recreates outdoors should continue to use caution. Make sure that your campfire is dead out before you leave; stop and park only in areas cleared of vegetation; and always carry a shovel, bucket and fire extinguisher.

Any open burning other than a campfire still requires a burn permit. Contact your local fire department or sheriff's office for more information.

Anyone who causes a wildland fire intentionally or through negligence will be held accountable for damage and suppression costs.

More details and information on regional fire restrictions are available at: <http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/index.html>.

For more information about fire prevention, please contact the Custer National Forest at 406-657-6200; Bureau of Land Management at 406-896-5013; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation at 406-247-4400; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks at 406-247-2940; Carbon County at 406-446-1595; Stillwater County at 406-321-0204; Sweet Grass County at 406-932-5143; Yellowstone County at 256-2775, or your local fire department or sheriff's office.

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Date: September 5, 2008
Contact: Willy Frank (406) 538-1918
Craig Flentie (406) 538-1943

Upper Arrow Creek Watershed Area Plan Preliminary EA Available for Public Review

The Bureau of Land Management's Lewistown Field Office (BLM) has completed and will be accepting public comments on a preliminary environmental assessment (EA) for the Upper Arrow Creek watershed area.

This EA assesses resource conditions on 49,861 acres of BLM-administered public lands encompassing 64 BLM grazing allotments in Fergus, Choteau and Judith Basin counties. It also identifies and evaluates management actions needed to ensure that rangeland health standards are met, and that livestock grazing practices conform with management guidelines. The end result of this effort will be the renewal of the 10-year grazing permits/leases covering the 64 allotments.

The public comment period on the preliminary EA will last through October 6, 2008. Copies of the Upper Arrow Creek Watershed Area Plan Preliminary EA have been mailed to all 62 permittees/lessees, other pertinent agencies, and interested publics. The preliminary EA will also be available on the BLM website at: http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/lewistown_field_office/Watershed_Plans.html.

If you have any questions regarding this planning process or if you are interested in reviewing a copy of the Upper Arrow Creek Watershed Area Plan Preliminary EA, please contact Dan Brunkhorst or Willy Frank at the Lewistown Field Office at (406) 538-1900.

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Date: September 4, 2008

Contact: Mike Small (406) 533-7643

Infested Trees Removed from Great Divide Ski Area

Hazardous trees have been removed from public lands within and near the Great Divide Ski Area. Infested by the mountain pine beetle, these trees were determined to be a safety concern.

“This area is used heavily in the wintertime,” said BLM Field Manager Rick Hotaling. “The dead and dying trees were a potential hazard for skiers, employees and facilities.”

The Bureau of Land Management, Butte Field Office conducted the removal, treating 150 acres in the area northwest of Helena near Marysville, in Lewis and Clark County.

RY Timber of Townsend worked closely with the BLM, Bozeman logger Brad Osler, the Great Divide Ski Company, and other local parties to substantially reduce the insect threat, minimize disturbance by heavy equipment, and ensure that recreational activities could occur this winter without disruption. The timber was delivered to the RY mill in Townsend for processing, with other materials going to the Smurfit-Stone mill near Missoula.

While the loggers found operations to be technically challenging, they completed the tree removal before beetle flights commenced. According to the BLM, the loggers promoted cooperation and their work on the ground was exceptional and done very quickly.

The BLM also installed pheromone packs to repel the beetles and reduce the risk of infestation and keep the remaining trees healthy. The BLM expects to continue pheromone installations annually in the ski area until the beetle threat along the Continental Divide moderates.

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Date: September 2, 2008

Contact: Steve Zellmer (406) 262-2831

Havre-area Grazing Leases Analyzed

The Bureau of Land Management's Havre Field Station has completed an environmental assessment analyzing the impacts of renewing 10-year livestock grazing leases on public lands in portions of Blaine, Hill, Liberty and Choteau counties.

There are approximately 4,627 acres of public land managed by the BLM in the Northeast Bears Paw and portions of the Lonesome Lake planning areas. These lands provide approximately 845 animal unit months of permitted livestock grazing (an animal unit month is the amount of grass a cow/calf pair would consume in one month).

If you would like a copy of this assessment or have questions about the document, please contact Steve Zellmer at 262-2831.

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